

AFRH-G...compliments of Hurricane Katrina



This is a view standing just outside the main gate looking in towards where the guard shack used to stand and what used to be Quarters A and B. In the background, Quarters C, D, and E are standing, barely, and were so far beyond repair that they have been completely demolished since this photo. The Chapel and Building 5 are still standing. The Wood Hobby Shop was completely destroyed as was the cabana and picnic area at the southeast side of the Home. The above picture is of the Home as it stands now, one of the only structures still intact on the entire Gulf Coast. See pages 8 and 9 for more photos of AFRH-G and the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina, pages 12 and 13 for photos of the Seabees of NMCB-7 during the storm and finally on pages 22 and 23 for Seabees of CBMU-202 and their amazing clean up efforts.

AFRH COMMUNICATOR

Phone: 1-800-422-9988

Web site: www.afrh.gov Email: sheila.abarr@afrh.gov

Sheila Abarr, AFRH Public Affairs Specialist, Marketing
 Howard J. Sweet (W) Editor
 Sheila Motley (W) Public Affairs Specialist
 Mary Kay Gominger (G) Public Affairs Specialist

Ludwig Olson (W) Writer
 Ray Colvard (W) History writer
 Jo Colvard (W) Proofreader
 Becki Zschiedrich Proofreader
 Joseph Lavryk (G) Photographer

The AFRH Communicator is an authorized publication of the Armed Forces Retirement Home.

Residents and employees are encouraged to submit photos, art, news items, and features. Materials will be edited by The AFRH Communicator staff for journalistic style and length.

Editorial views and opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of AFRH or its leadership. Throughout the newspaper AFRH-G input will be denoted as (G) and AFRH-W as (W).

AFRH-W Editors Column



Laugh Trak
Going the Distance

AMTRAC INFO



The standard distance between rails in this country is 4 feet, 8 1/2 inches (U.S. standard railroad gauge). That's an exceedingly odd number.

Why is that gauge used? Because that's the way rails were built in England, and the U.S. railroads were built by English expatriates.

Why did the English build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used. Why did the tramway builders use that gauge? Because they used the same jigs and tools that were used to build wagons, which had that wheel spacing.

Okay, why did the wagons builders use that wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing, the wagons would break on the old, rutted, long-distance roads that had that spacing.

So, who built these old rutted roads? The first long-distance roads in Europe were built by Imperial Rome for the benefit of their legions. The initial ruts, which everyone else had to match for fear of destroying their wagons, were first made by Roman war chariots. Since the chariots were made by Imperial Rome, they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing.

Thus, the U.S. standard railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8 1/2 inches derives from the original specification for Imperial Roman army war chariots. Specs and bureaucracies live forever.

So, the next time you are handed a specification and wonder what horse's backside came up with it, you may be exactly right. The Imperial Roman chariots were made to be just wide enough to accommodate the back-ends of two war horses.

ENJOY YOUR PAPER

AFRH Residency

AFRH is not just a place to live but a place to live more. Our model retirement centers are designed for residents to maintain an independent lifestyle in an environment designed for safety, comfort and personal enrichment.

Eligibility:

Military veterans from each service branch can live at either Home.

Veterans are eligible to become a resident of the AFRH if their active duty service in the military was at least 50 percent enlisted, warrant officer or limited duty officer and who are:

- Veterans with 20 or more years of active duty service and are at least 60 years old, or
- Veterans unable to earn a livelihood due to a service-connected disability, or
- Veterans unable to earn a livelihood due to injuries, disease, or disability, and who served in a war theater or received hostile fire pay, or
- Female veterans who served prior to 1948.

To receive an informational brochure please contact the following office:

AFRH at 1-800-422-9988, or write to AFRH Admissions Office, 3700 N. Capitol St. NW, Washington DC 20011-8400.

Visit us on the web at: <http://www.AFRH.gov>

Message from the Chief Operating Officer



As I prepared my article for last month's Communicator, Hurricane Katrina was just beginning to pound the Gulfport/Biloxi coastline. Little did we know the full magnitude of Katrina's fury at that time. The good news is that we survived this natural disaster, all of our residents and staff are safe, and we are now postured to move out on the necessary next steps.

First, we expect the results of the Structural and Environmental Study will be provided to us on September 28th. This report will assist us in making decisions regarding refurbishment and construction efforts in the future.

Second, as previously mentioned, AFRH-Gulfport residents should expect to reside in Washington for approximately a year. For planning purposes residents should anticipate a year's stay. This week we issued Fact Sheet 11 which outlines options available to Gulfport residents. Each Gulfport resident should familiarize themselves with the contents of Fact Sheet 11.

Third, as soon as we receive the Structural and Environmental Study results and confirm whether the Gulfport

building is safe, we will contract with a bonded packing/transportation company to pack-up the contents of Gulfport resident's rooms and transport them to Washington. For residents who have not provided us a list of items regarding the contents of their rooms, I ask that you do so in the next few days.

Lastly, I have asked approximately 20 employees from Gulfport to come to Washington for 3 to 4 months to provide additional services to all of our residents. Residents will see Gulfport staff members in the Resident Services area (Volunteer Program, the Recreation Programs Office, and the Admissions Office), Campus Operations area and a small group to Healthcare.

The goal is to have the Washington and Gulfport staff members act as one team to serve both our Washington and Gulfport residents as a whole.

Much of the focus this past month has been directed toward our Gulfport residents. I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize our Washington residents who are sharing their Home and donating their time and skills to make sure the Gulfport folks had what they needed. Thank you for your hospitality and caring spirit.

Timothy C. Cox

Office of the Deputy Director



On Sunday, August 29, 2005, the Mississippi Gulf Coast was enjoying the very best of times when a storm of monumental proportion turned her destructive fury directly towards the Mississippi coastline. In what seemed to be a lifetime wait for Katrina's arrival, definitely turned into the worst of times. "Charles Dickens", A Tale of Two Cities, probably stated it best, "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times."

The direction and future of over 500 residents, staff and countless family members will forever be altered. Homes along the coastline that have stood for more than 100 years are mere piles of lath and plaster, and pieces of antique furniture are scattered miles from their original locations.

Mighty majestic live oaks whose impressively large braches that have stood sound for generations are now in piles being shoved into larger piles by machines that will never have the same conscience for the Gulf Coast's history that the oaks held so dearly. The 400-year old Graduation Oak that adorns the grounds of the Armed Forces Retirement Home-Gulfport did withstand the vicious winds and tidal surge brought forth by Katrina and still stands on our campus as a powerful symbol of the heart and humanity of the Home.

We, residents, staff and family members, will be forever grateful to the "Band of Brothers and Sisters" from the Seabee Center in Gulfport. These military men and women aided in so

many ways and we will never forget their collective contributions to the Home.

Our leadership at the AFRH continues to support us as we go through the process of recovery and clean up. A Structural and Environmental Study report is due to senior management that will assist them in making future decisions. After careful analysis of the Study, briefings will be presented to Congressional members.

There are many questions that we have asked ourselves and others about the Home. Let take a shot at some of those questions.

1. If I venture to the coast, can I go up into my room and pick-up my personal gear? Yes and no. Yes, you can certainly visit the Home, but because we still do not have power in the building it would not be prudent to allow you to walk up the humid and dark stairwells. We are currently coordinating with Mississippi State, (who are bonded), to provide retrieval and reclamation services. Gulfport residents have been asked to provide the COO with individual lists of small items they would like immediately retrieved from their rooms and shipped Washington. Immediate items may be personal papers, medicine, valuables, etc., After the "immediate" items have been shipped, the Mississippi State team will proceed to box any other belongings requested by residents. For safety and liability reasons, we need to strictly follow the above procedures regarding the retrieval and transport of resident belongings. Please do not ask staff members to retrieve items from your rooms.

2. What about the safety deposit boxes? The safety deposit boxes are boxed in five industrial strength wooden shipping containers built by the Seabees ready for shipping to the AFRH-Washington. The exact timetable for

Continued on page 4

Office of the Command Master Chief –Gulfport



The residents and staff at the home in Gulfport were at the "tip of the spear" as they watched Katrina hammer their home on the Gulf Coast. From their windows they watched nature's most devastating act in history rip out the concrete walkway that used to cross over Highway 90 and mangle the gate and fence that always kept their home safe and secure for many years. It was like watching an army's first line defenses being destroyed by a powerful enemy force. On August 29, shortly after breakfast ended, Katrina made her way into our main facility with a 25-foot title surge that shattered the front doors and overtook the foyer with three feet of water. The rushing water quickly made its way down the corridors where many residents in wheel chairs were sitting in the dark waiting to be brought up the stairs to the third floor. I can only imagine what ran through their minds as they felt the water rise against their legs.... I am in awe...our residents never cease to amaze me. Not one resident panicked or complained as Seabees and staff carried their, tender to the touch, bodies up three flights of stairs. By the grace of God and the gallant efforts of our Seabees, staff, and volunteers we were able to get every person to safety.

The senior staff in DC made a good decision to start initial clean up efforts in order to avoid environmental problems, protect memorabilia, and reduce further economical expense to the Home. Twenty-seven Seabees from CBMU 202 arrived and set up a tent camp on the site and started cleaning up the grounds. They arranged the battered up cars into a lot for insurance adjusters, and completely gutted out building five and the first floor in building one. Volunteers from MSU also arrived and cleaned/boxed up memorabilia from the first floor, which Seabees removed and staged in the foyer. Campus Ops is close to bringing life back into the building. Within the next few days we should have power, an operational elevator and running water. After power, water, and air are restored, a contractor will come to pack out the rooms and ship resident belongings to DC.

I want to assure the Gulfport residents that we are doing everything physically possible to get the Home back in order and ready for permanent repairs. The support from the agency in DC has been extremely strong and positive. There are rumors flying that some people want the Gulfport home shut down permanently and the money invested in the DC home. I recommend you contact your congressman and express your concerns...you are definitely not a shy bunch! We will be visiting soon and I look forward to seeing you all. Take care of each other.

Special Thanks:

-To the 19 Seabees of NMCB SEVEN who rescued residents from the storm surge and helped them and reassured them through out the storm.

-To the staff and resident volunteers who helped carry disabled residents up the stairs during the storm surge and took care of our residents

-To the 27 Seabees of CBMU 202 who's efforts eliminated future environmental problems in our buildings and for saving priceless memorabilia

-To the volunteers of MSU who took time away from their families to carefully clean and box up our precious memorabilia from the first floor

-To the Campus Ops crew for the hard work...we are close to restoring power and water to building one

-To the A School students from the Naval Construction Training Center that came in the day after the storm and helped the residents go back to their rooms and pack for DC

-To the Canadian Navy for their humanitarian efforts in assisting with recovery and cleanup

-To all the staff for their hard work and dedication to the Home

Joe Perrone

AFRH-G Command Master Chief

Office of the Deputy Director- Continued from page 4

shipping has not reach final decision due to the amount of business and delays the local transfer and storage companies on the coast are experiencing. I will let you know as soon as we can make the necessary arrangements to transfer the boxes to the AFRH-Washington.

3. How about the staff, has everyone been accounted for after the storm? All of the staff have been accounted for. Some have lost their homes and personal belongings in the storm.

4. What about my vehicle in the Downtown Parking Garage? The automobiles in the garage are being moved back to the Home. The first floor parking area suffered substantial damage and those vehicles located on the bottom floor will be towed back to the Home beginning this week. The rest of the vehicles will be driven back to the Home, particularly if keys were left for this purpose. If you have a vehicle in the garage and want to know the status of your automobile, please contact me at 228-348-6608. Also,

all vehicles left on the facility grounds suffered substantial damage.

I will continue to update everyone on the progress at the AFRH-Gulfport and please know that we have each of you in our prayers. We are so thankful for our sister site in Washington, DC. I cannot thank you for being there for us when we needed you the most.

Robert S. Locke

Office of the Deputy Director



S i m p l y amazing! That is the best way I can describe the events of the past few weeks at the Armed Forces Retirement Home. The Herculean efforts of the staff

and residents have been amazing in preparing and indoctrinating our “new” residents from Gulfport. Once we received notification that our Gulfport residents were coming to Washington, our “team” started working around the clock to prepare the campus for our new arrivals. Many, many kudos of thanks are to be doled out. The entire staff responded brilliantly to expand facilities and services for the increase in population. The RAC and residents stepped up to the plate to manage the Donation Center and act as emissaries to our new residents. And of course, our team of contractors flexed their muscle in order to provide the critical serv-

ices necessary to make it happen.

There is one special group that needs special recognition...our volunteers. I don't know how we could have accomplished all of this in such a short timeframe without the hundreds of volunteers that responded to the call. These individuals, from all walks of life, touched the lives of many as our “soldiers of compassion.” If you have volunteered, currently volunteering, or thinking about volunteering in the future, I commend you for your selfless deeds that have contributed to a culture of compassion. Let me put a plug in for volunteerism. There are many benefits from giving freely of your time and expertise in order to make a difference. Volunteering can help you: make important networking contacts; learn or develop skills; gain work experience; build self-esteem and self-confidence; improve health; help you meet new people; feel needed and valued; make a difference in someone's life; and express gratitude for help you may have received in the past from an organization. Whether it is important to you

to solve a community problem, advance a worth cause or to develop as a person, volunteering offers many benefits in appreciation for the gift of your time and expertise.

Soon you will see a new “Caught Being Good” recognition program in place. This is a program that has been used successfully at our Gulfport home. If you notice someone doing a good deed, please take a few moments to fill out a card and drop it in the box. The boxes (thanks to the artisans in our woodworking shop) will be placed adjacent to the dining halls in Scott and LaGarde buildings.

Since my last article, we said goodbye to Rick Coleman who retired after a combined 46 years of distinguished military and federal civil service. Although it was only for a short time, it was an honor and a privilege to have had the opportunity to work with such a committed and dedicated professional. Rick, I bid you fair winds and a following sea.

Be safe and I'll see around the campus!

CDR Timothy Burns

Armed Forces Retirement Home World War II 60th Anniversary Commemoration



On Monday, 26 September 2005, the Department of Defense World War II 60th Anniversary Commemoration Committee delighted AFRH with a special Commemoration Ceremony for AFRH residents. Above left; AFRH residents Edward Coe (G) and Daniel Funk (W) were presented the Honorable Service Lapel Pin (The Ruptured Duck) by Lieutenant General Harry E. Soyster, US Army (ret), Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Army and Michael J. Kussmann, MD, Deputy Under Secretary for Health of the Veteran's Affairs Administrations. Right; the USO Liberty Belles provides and exceptional musical performance which was enjoyed by all.

Donation center in full swing....

A word from the AFRH-W Resident Advisory Council

By Mimi Rivkin, RAC Chair (W)

Welcome to our new residents (temporary or permanent!)

I'm grateful to Mr. Dickerson for having the confidence in our RAC to tell us to run the Donation Center. The generosity of people from DC, Virginia and Maryland and other states is overwhelming. Our close neighbors have showered us with donations to let us know that they love having our Home here; and that they welcome the Gulfport residents with open arms. We have many letters and cards from people to prove it and to display.

There are beautiful clothes, linens, toiletries, underwear- you name it- including many new items for men and women. Don't buy anything till you've seen it all! As you request items, we add them to the "wish list".

We are really happy to have you here. We think you'll liven up the place! It's even ok if W & G residents fight with each other- that just means we're all "kinfolk"!

Affectionately, Mimi Rivkin,
RAC Chair and all the rest of us.



Thank you!



Hundreds of volunteers provide a valuable service to new residents....

By Melodie Menke (W)

Some say Washington DC is an unfeeling city, people are just too busy to care but the Residents and staff at Armed Forces Retirement Home know differently. On Wednesday Aug 31, local radio stations told listeners of the sudden need for volunteers at AFRH. The sudden need due to our sister home in Gulfport MS



U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Air Force working together at the Donation Center.

being damaged by Hurricane Katrina and 336 AFRH-G Veterans were enroute to the safety of Washington DC. Within 3 minutes of radio stations informing the community the phone line in the Volunteer Services Office began

to ring and it has not stopped since. The community's care and concern for our veterans has been simply overwhelming and the stories have been heartwarming. One young Marine after assisting with the reorganization of our warehouse, heavy lifting in a hot warehouse, told us thank you for letting him volunteer. He is from the state of Mississippi and this was a way for him to help his state and his fellow veterans.



BOSS U.S. Marines lending "muscle" in the Pipes Building.

One mom and her 12-year-old son in DC wanted to spend part of their hard-earned vacation time, volunteering to make up beds. One active duty Air Force member driving home at 6 p.m. after a hard day, just decided to stop by and see if anyway needed a hand, we

did, we worked till 9 p.m. that night.

Staff stayed late and past employees came out to help. The Navy Chiefs came and cleaned up an area of the grounds, even bringing chainsaws to get rid of fallen trees downed by a severe

windstorm a month ago. The Air Force, the Navy, the Marines, and the Army played a huge part of the volunteer effort of getting things ready. The day of the



Above: Elizabeth Lindstrom (G) poses with Veterans Administration Representative Dr. Lee Ferguson.

Homecoming had 220 volunteers assigned to each segment of the in processing. The volunteers, a mix of ages, backgrounds, active duty and civilian waited hours for the arrival of our Gulfport Residents. As the buses arrived, they formed a human gauntlet for the Residents to walk through, with American flags waving and lots of hugs and handshakes. Volunteers stayed late into the night to make sure Residents were settled in. And the volunteers did not disappear after the arrival of our new Residents. Individuals and groups are still getting things done, assisting Residents select free clothing, manning phones, delivering messages from the message center, and setting up long term volunteer projects for the holidays for all the Residents at AFRH.

As you look at all the accomplishments the volunteers completed in such a short time, and the teamwork that formed in minutes of strangers meeting each other, saying thank you is simply inadequate. But one young lady may have put it best, "We help now, cause these veterans have already helped us out."



2nd Annual Amy BOSS Program, no games this year; all work in the warehouse and still they smile.

Here's how Katrina changed things....

Words of advice:

Don't let the reality ruin your day

By Mary Kay Gominger (G)

It's been a month now since Hurricane Katrina brought death, destruction, and total havoc to so many people on the Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama coasts. Slowly, ever so slowly, the pieces of the lives of Gulf Coast residents are being put back together into some kind of order. Most have finally come to realize that things will never be as they were. That's the reality that it took days even weeks for most of us to understand. Now, any kind of order is a welcome change.

For the residents of AFRH-G, the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina to our Gulfport campus made it impossible to stay. Most residents boarded buses and headed to the DC campus the day after the storm. Others that checked out on leave prior to the storm have come back to see the devastation for themselves before deciding that they indeed needed to find some-



This vehicle did not fare so well. The vehicle is in the AFRH-G parking lot located west of the main building by Building 5.

where else to call home for awhile. And as the Gulfport residents settled in their new home in DC, the staff in Gulfport was left responsible for securing the grounds, protecting valuables in the



The AFRH-G main building can barely be seen behind the great pile of rubble that was once the quarters located near the beach.



This photograph was taken a few hours into the storm, before the tidal surge came in. This is the parking lot east of the main building. The vehicles were eventually completely submerged.

building and salvaging records and equipment not damaged during the storm.

In the first few days after the storm, staff members trickled in steadily to see how the Home fared. The majority of our employees' homes suffered damage ranging from total destruction to severe damage, flooding and structural damage caused by trees. Many employees lost their vehicles in the tidal surge and flood waters. Very few came out unscathed. The past few weeks following the hurricane and the upcoming months will find us all faced with the overwhelming task of putting our homes and lives back together.

Most of us at AFRH-G are experiencing feelings of uncertainty, frustration and great loss. We are also concerned about the residents and how they are doing in DC or wherever they have chosen to live. We miss the smiling faces and warm greetings from the residents when we show up for work each morning. We all, too, feel very fortunate to have our families, friends and co-workers to depend on during these challenging times. We know that one day, maybe not too far down the road, we will look back and see how far we have come.

In the meantime, we'll press on in Gulfport. A t-shirt a clean-up crewman had on the other day said it best -- "Don't let the reality ruin your day."



(Above) Hurricane Katrina ripped through Quarters C leaving it in shambles.

(Right) Cars in the parking lot near Building 5 ended up piled high on the fence line. The cars were pushed against the fence line by the tidal surge.



...in just one day!

“King Ludwig and His Castles”

By Ludwig Olson (W)

King Ludwig II of Bavaria was probably the most unusual monarch of all time. Born in 1845, he showed great interest in beautiful and elegant things, especially castles. He was a dreamer fascinated by ancient legends. It seemed that nothing was fine enough to suit his fancy.

Ludwig's father, King Maximilian II, died in 1864, and Ludwig took the throne. Europe was in turmoil at that time, and Bavaria needed a strong army for defense. However, Ludwig was so preoccupied with making plans for castles that he gave very little priority to military matters. Furthermore, he was a great admirer of French architecture, and made secret trips to Versailles where he got inspiration for his French style castles.

The most picturesque castle built under Ludwig's direction was Neuschwanstein located in the beautiful forested mountains on the German-Austrian border. It is a Germanic-style castle similar to those built in the Middle Ages, and has several spire-like towers. Often called a fairytale castle, it is among the world's greatest tourist attractions.

Another German-type castle is Hohenschwangau only a short distance from Neuschwanstein. It is much smaller than Neuschwanstein and was purchased by Maximilian II in 1833.

Ludwig inherited it.



King Ludwig's Neuschwanstein Castle

A very elegant French-style castle, also not far from Neuschwanstein, was called Linderhof. It has eye-catching beauty, and was Ludwig's pride and joy. Many people consider it to be the world's most beautiful castle. It was my wife's favorite.

Near Linderhof is an underground man-made lake used by Ludwig to view Wagner's fairytale operas. Ludwig and the composer Richard Wagner were very close friends.

The magnificent Herrenchiemsee castle, on an island in a lake southeast of Munich, is probably the ultimate in luxury. It is the largest of Ludwig's French-type castles, and has a long hall of mirrors like the castle in Versailles. Elegant purple drapes on the bedroom windows were sewn with genuine gold thread, and required the work of 200 seamstresses for seven years. Chandeliers were carved from genuine ivory.

Building the castles was a severe drain on the Bavarian treasury, and high government officials decided to put a stop to it. Ludwig was declared mentally unstable. In 1886, he drowned in a lake. His death was officially reported to be suicide.

Although Ludwig had a sad ending, his castles remain a very valuable legacy. They are maintained in excellent condition, and serve as a prime attraction for tourists worldwide.

King Health Center residents invited to Fort Meade Picnic

By Carol Mitchell (W)

AFRH-W King Health Center residents were invited to the Ft. Meade Army Base earlier this month for the Naval Security Group Activity (NSGA) command picnic. It was a beautiful sunny day at Ft. Meade's Burda Lake Park! The disc jockey was playing music for all ages, the wonderful aroma of burgers and dogs being cooked on the grill wafted through the air, and there were activities for all to partake in or to just sit back and enjoy. Some of the activities included: carnival games, a dunk tank, volleyball, cake walk, snowball stand, driving safe information booths, and many other activities. The Ft. Meade active duty personnel in attendance made the AFRH-W veterans feel honored, respected and at home.

The responsible party for inviting and sponsoring the KHC residents to this wonderful function was the Ft. Meade First Class Petty Officer's Association under the coordination of Tim Underhill and Gordon Walker. This group for the past 4 years has been volunteering for the AFRH-W KHC Recreation Therapy Department as off-station resident escorts for various trips into the community. As volunteer escorts they assist resident to museums, restaurants, picnics, and shopping malls. The residents and KHC Recreational Therapy staff look forward to future endeavors together.

The End of a Long Journey



A TIME OF TERROR

By Ray Hutchins (G)

On Monday, 29 August 2005 I had the horrific experience of Mother Nature at her worst, Hurricane Katrina. I was a resident at the Armed Forces Retirement Home – Gulfport (AFRH-G) located in Gulfport, Mississippi. With the arrival of Hurricane Katrina my life as I knew it came crashing down from peace and quite to absolute chaos. There were winds of 125 to 165 miles per hour that literally tore my life apart. In fact, the wind was blowing so hard that the building was shaking and swaying so much that the water in my commode was sloshing and spilling onto the floor. Think about it, no lights, no water, no elevator and no air conditioning. This went on for two days before we were evacuated from our home (AFRH-G) of 15 years. The tidal surge was 30 feet and this completely flooded the first floor wiping out all of the above utilities.

The Director and Assistant Director lived in quarters on the beach beside the home and were completely demolished. The Chapel seemed to have missed a lot of damage, only one stained glass window was broken and the door was blown off. The automobiles in the parking lot were simply floating around and some were really badly damaged.

Two days later we received word that 10 buses from Washington, DC were coming to take us away. We could only take one small suitcase with us and were escorted by police with flashing lights as we departed in eerie silence as we left Gulfport, Mississippi. It was an awesome sight, because of the complete silence and total blackness of the night.

We arrived in Washington, DC at the AFRH-W on 2 September 2005 and were pleasantly greeted by the residents, staff, media and active duty military personnel.



Hurricane Katrina in Gulfport**Seabees....to the rescue!**

A team of Seabees attached to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 7, homeported at the Naval Construction Battalion Center in Gulfport were on hand at the AFRH-G during Hurricane Katrina to provide support as needed and they did that and so much more.

As was typical prior to a hurricane, the Seabees assisted in hurricane preparedness; boarding up windows and doors, securing loose items around the grounds and sandbagging doorways. They bunked down Sunday night, August 28, at the Home as did the some 400 retirees and veterans that chose to stay for the hurricane and Team 1 staff members. The next morning proved to be a new day...a day unlike any they had ever experienced before and probably will never experience again. Hurricane Katrina, the largest and most devastating storm in the history of this country, was barreling down on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Things went from bad to worse right after breakfast as winds topping 150 mph continually battered the Coast for the entire day and into the night. Windows shook, joints creaked and water started seeping under doors on the ground floor. As she made landfall, just west of Gulfport, the force of the tidal surge was more than the building could handle. Water gushed in the front doors and within minutes was waist high. With power out and generators virtually useless because of the high water, the priority was moving everyone to higher ground. Most of the residents were already on higher floors but the ones on the first floor were quickly moved up by the Seabees. Using a human chain, they transported the residents up the muggy, dark stairwell up to the third, fourth and fifth floors to safety. Moving with lightning speed, the Seabees on the bottom floor stood deep in water as they passed the residents up the chain.

Once residents were settled in it became a long waiting game. The storm raged all day and night. No rest for the weary, the Seabees spent more of the night hauling furniture up and down the stairwell, arranging sleeping places for the residents. By morning's light, the devastation that most hoped was a bad dream was a reality. Seabees assisted residents down the stairwell outside to fresh air and sunshine and finally a chance to assess the damage. With the residents standing at attention, the Seabees proceeded to the flag pole and raised the soaked but intact American flag.

Later that day, buses showed up to transport the residents to DC. The Seabees finally got a chance to check the status of their homes and families. They were quickly replaced by Seabees from CMBU 202 out of Key West, Florida.



Seabees from NMCB-7 and an A School student from the Naval Construction Training Center move residents from the main building out into the front the day after the hurricane.



Left: Seabees help a resident out of the main building to fresh air and sunshine the morning after the storm.

Above: With Hurricane Katrina finally making landfall and heading north through Mississippi, the Seabees took a short break to re-hydrate, dry their feet and get a few and get a few minutes of shut eye.



Communications specialists from the Seabee Center work on establishing contact with the outside world immediately after the storm.



Battered but not beaten...the Seabees raised the flag the day after the storm as residents and staff stood at attention. It was a quiet and emotional moment as everyone proudly watched the flag being raised while at the same time realizing the devastation that had just taken place.

USO celebrity tour features**Miss USA & Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders**

Left: Walt Hutchins and Dallas Cowboy Cheerleader Laura Beke. Walt's smile tells all . . . she made my day.

Right: Who is that with the Cheshire Cat grin. Look good together, eh?



Below: Nelson Jamison & Chelsea Cooley Miss USA. Nelson is one lucky man.

Below: AFRH-W Resident with Dallas Cowboy Cheerleader Christine Chancellor. You are never too old to enjoy beauty!!



Concentration game makes a memorable debut

By Keith Turner (W)

The famous old card game that would put your memory to the test was turned into a game show at the AFRH-W this month and the turn out for participants and guest was rated in the excellent category. Eight tables were set up for the contestants with two at each table. A deck of cards were spread out face down on each table. The residents' memory had to be sharp because they were only allowed to turn over four cards at a time and they had to remember where those cards were in order to get a match. After battling for over an hour, the final two contestants who weren't eliminated were Robert Jirak and Ralph Randers.

The stage was set and the excitement built as Mr. Jirak, who had been blowing everyone away, took an early lead over Mr. Randers. Randers, who was also the big money winner at casino night, has been on a hot streak in everything he's touched this year. Jirak's one mistake opened the door for Randers to come back and take the lead. Randers racked up points quickly to take the lead and pull away. Mr. Randers was one



point away from winning the tournament and 11 points in front of Mr. Jirak, but his one mistake gave Mr. Jirak a chance to come back and with that chance Jirak worked his skills perfection. He couldn't win because Randers too many points to lose, but he could tie the game and split the Championship title, and he did just that. "This was as good as it gets," said Mike Longwell, a resident contestant who made it to the final four. Congratulations to Mr. Ralph Randers and Mr. Robert Jirak, our 2005 Concentration Champions.

Fun Fest enjoyed on Labor Day

By Keith Turner (W)

There were plenty of games and lots of singing Karaoke style to entertain the AFRH residents from Gulfport and DC. Jerry Carter and Keith Turner teamed up to join the events together and pull off one of the best cookouts ever. As we welcome the many residents from Gulfport, the residents from both homes made the entire day a lot of fun. The participation in every event was strong and the residents were very competitive. The 1-1/2 mile walk/run was complet-



ed first by Dale Baker. The ring toss was won by Ron Thompson. The softball toss was won by Ernest Fowler. The softball hitting was won by James Cox. The golf putting was won by Mike Longwell. The Hot Shot basketball shooting was won by Neville Smith.

And the horseshoe toss was won by Mr. Busbie. Special thanks to AAFES for their participation in the Fest with their roof beer floats. Please excuse us if any name was misspelled based on the residents' handwriting. Another great day, another successful event.

New Tai Chi classes being offered prove popular with AFRH-W residents

By Howard Turner (W)

Keith Turner and Calvin Woodfork have stumbled on something that seems to be pretty hot right now. It's a Tai Chi exercising class that is great for seniors. How hot is the class? The Class has an enrollment

of 14 residents and the class can only hold 10. Calvin, a certified instructor also, is seen here working with a portion of the class. The course will last for eight weeks and a new class will begin.



American Legion
AFRH Post 70

Meets in Defenders' Inn the 1st
Saturday of each month Except July and August

The next regular meeting of the
Post will be on Saturday, October 1st,
2005.

Senior Vice Ray Smith will
report on happenings at August's National
Convention held in Hawaii, and
there will be reports on other events
taking place during our vacation time.

Is He Lonesome
Or Just Blind
That Guy Who Drives
So Close Behind
Burma Shave

WELLNESS CENTER OPENING!!!

By Al Mori (W)

The walls are gone and you will soon be using the new Wellness Center on the ground floor of the Scott Building. The tentative date for the opening is the 26th of September. There are many new and efficient changes that you will notice when you begin using the new Wellness Center. The best part for all residents is that you have pretty much one stop shopping; everything is in one location for the most part. No more running to one place to get records and then on to somewhere else for the clinic you are scheduled to go to.

One of the biggest niceties is going to be the waiting area with the large built in TV.

The whole area is nice and bright. No more sitting in chairs outside the offices with all of the comings and goings of traffic through the old Community Health hallway. Now you will be able to relax in a very nice area and watch TV, read about wellness issues or just relax. Or you can browse the windows in the hallway; they will be set up to display different health topics monthly. I know many of you will enjoy this.

The intent of the Wellness Center is not just a place to go when you are sick but a place that can assist you in developing a healthy lifestyle, to let you live your life in a healthy manner. So you can think and learn more about a healthy lifestyle. This in turn leads to early discovery of medical problems

in the early stages before they become hard to treat.

Additionally, this month we have been informed by Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) that they will no longer be able to provide support for the Congestive Heart Failure (CHF) and the Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) support group. Which was held monthly in the Scott Meditation Room. The reasons cited for cancellation were a shortage of medical staff and the patient load being seen at WRAMC. Other options are being explored to see if another medical service provider may be able to assist us in keeping this valuable program up and running.

Local Anglers offer fishing trips to all DC residents

Through mentoring, residents can fish and a great friendship can be made

By John Colburn (W)

When, following the destruction of their Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH) in Gulfport, Miss., some 400 residents were moved to the DC campus, the members of the Northern Virginia Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the Federation of Fly Fishers (NoVA TU/FFF) decided to invite all veterans at the Washington Home to go on fishing trips in the Washington area.

The process is simple. The resident desiring to go fishing contacts John Colburn, a resident of the AFRH-Washington and a member of NoVA TU/FFF, who then contacts George Paine of NoVA TU/FFF. George contacts one of the NoVA TU/FFF members and gives him or her the name and phone number of the resident. The club member contacts the resident, and they arrange to go on their fishing trip.

The club member is not a guide and does not get paid for taking the resident on a fishing trip. Rather, he or she is a mentor showing the resident a place to fish, giving assistance when needed and perhaps, furnishing the necessary tackle. There is no charge to the resident for the trip, but he or she is

encouraged to pay for the gas and perhaps buy lunch for the mentor. It is quite possible that the strangers on the fishing trip could become good friends.

Within a few hours after flyers announcing the fishing trips program were posted at the Home, two residents had contacted Colburn, who in turn passed their names to Mr. Paine of NoVA TU/FFF. At this writing, Mr. Paine is in the process of contacting mentors for the two residents.

Colburn has contacted other fishing clubs in the Washington area about the program, and to date, two, the Chesapeake Women Anglers and the Potomac Patuxent Chapter of TU, have shown a definite interest.

From panfish in the C&O Canal to trout in the mountains of Maryland and Virginia to the many saltwater species in Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic inshore waters, there is a wealth of fishing opportunities for the residents of AFRH Washington to enjoy and for the mentors of NOVA TU/FFF and other clubs to show to these veterans.

AFRH residents interested in accepting the invitations to go fishing should contact John Colburn at Home extension 6-5112 or 202-545-8776.

Residents enjoy Christmas in August

Steven Briefs (CTRS)

On Saturday, August 27, 2005 residents at the King Health Center enjoyed a special "Christmas in August" program. The Ladies Auxiliary of American Legion Post # 8 from Capital Hill came for the second year in a row to brighten up the hot summer month of August for us. As part of their support for active and retired military, they came by with a carload of gifts and refreshments for our residents. The ladies provided a variety of t-shirts, stockings, socks, small toiletries, pens and letter papers, books of stamps, books, CD's and video tapes. These were all provided for free and when our residents finished picking out what they liked, everyone sat down with refreshments and shared in memories of days gone by. Thirty-seven residents came by the Recreation Therapy Clinic and it looked like the volunteers from the American Legion Post got as much out of the program as our own residents did. There were many smiles and hand-shakes for everyone.

AFRH-G receives humanitarian effort from volunteers of Mississippi State University

A group of volunteers from Mississippi State University in Starkville, Miss., immediately made contact with AFRH-G after Hurricane Katrina wanting to help out in any way they could. They came in the first weekend after the storm and cleaned, packed and loaded memorabilia from the first floor onto trucks for storage at the Seabee Center. The next weekend they were back, this time in the library. The group painstakingly went through all the books in the library and carefully boxed them for future use. A librarian from the University came with the group and organized the storage of the boxes in an organized fashion.



This MSU volunteer pulls books from a shelf and places them in boxes. Most of the books in the library were able to be saved.



The librarian from MS State University, Craig Piper, labels boxes as they are packed. The volunteers spent five days working in the AFRH-G library, salvaging the Homes books.



The boxes from the library were stacked high in the lobby as the Mississippi State volunteers worked throughout the day.



Seabees providing outstanding support! Seabees of CBMU 202 carefully remove memorabilia from the first floor. The Seabees removed all memorabilia from the first floor, passing them off to the volunteers from Mississippi State University to clean and store. The Seabees have also removed all carpeting, office furniture and equipment and files from the first floor. The group, from Key West, Fla., live on the AFRH-G campus in tents and have worked tirelessly for the past month gutting the first floor and assisting in recovery efforts of the Home. See page 23 for more pictures of the work they Seabees are doing at AFRH-G.

Labor Day & Annual Resident/Employee Picnic

Last days of summer



2ND ANNUAL ANTIQUE FIRE TRUCK SHOW

RED HOT AND BLUE



A Bit of Soldiers' Home History

By Leah Suhrstedt

As a summer intern for the National Trust for Historic Preservation's project to preserve and develop the Lincoln Cottage, I recently reviewed all the Board of Commissioners' minutes for the Soldiers' Home. These minutes were kept from 1851 until 1978. I worked from transcriptions prepared by the late Home resident named Beryl X. Smith. The original minutes are on deposit at the National Archives. My task in reviewing the more than 800 pages of minutes was two-fold: 1) to understand the broad chronology of the Soldiers' Home history as described by these records, and 2) to identify specific management-driven changes at the Home that resulted in new systems or new construction either in or related to the buildings in the campus historic core. The buildings constituting the campus historic core include the Lincoln Cottage (known from 1889 – 2003 as the Anderson Cottage), Quarters 1 and Quarters 2, and the southern portion of the present-day Sherman Building.

Who were the members of the Board of Commissioners, you might ask. Traditionally, high-ranking retired or active duty generals served as the Governor, Deputy Governor, and the Quartermaster General for the Home. Other important U.S. military figures of both the Army and the Air Force [not Marines or Navy? – I think the Navy leadership embodied by Capt. Soares and the new, current director, Commander Tim Burns, are the first Navy directors – fact check] also sat on the Board of Commissioners. The Board made all significant administrative decisions for the Home, and existed as a decision-making entity from the Home's founding in 1851 until 1993. During my research, I discovered some interesting facts.

In 1903, the Board contemplated tearing down or removing Lincoln Cottage to

another location in favor of building a new mess hall in the Cottage's spot. The Lieutenant General of the Army argued that, "The most available and most suitable ground for any large building for the Soldiers' Home is that on the west side of the present Scott Building [Sherman Building today]. It is only occupied now by a small old building, known as the Anderson Building, and the objection to tearing this building down or removing it is that it was once occupied for a short time by President Lincoln...By the expenditure of a few thousand dollars it could be removed a very short distance to suitable ground and put in perfect order and properly preserved as a memorial hall. The ground would then be available for any building that may be required." Luckily, that proposal did not fly.

The Lincoln Cottage also was used at various points in the Home's history as quarters for the Home band, the first female residents, visiting guests, and in the 1970s its first floor housed the "Lincoln Lounge." This lounge was a bar where residents could enjoy themselves. In 1981, one Board Meeting entry recorded that a general inspecting the Lounge "was pleased with the redecoration of Anderson Guest House and Lincoln Lounge to better reflect the Lincoln era." No mention was made of the historical fact that Abraham Lincoln was a teetotaler.

Another interesting piece of Soldiers' Home history is the use of detention barracks. In the past, members of the Home who disobeyed the Home's rules were often sentenced to time in the detention barracks, a practice which continued at least through the 1950s. Offenses which warranted such punishment almost always involved alcohol and/or disobeying orders. In 1947, one man "resisted the Guard and escaped from arrest," however he was "later apprehended by Home Police." Detention was a very common occurrence in the Home's history,

at least until the mid-20th century, and such events were discussed at the Board Meetings.

The inspection reports completed by members of the Board frequently complimented the Home's residents and premises. One report entry reads: "The manifest interest of the members in these fine facilities, and the excellence of the meal we enjoyed at luncheon with them, completed the evidence that the U.S. Soldiers' Home is a real Home and not a mere institution." Another report stated that the Home members "evidence a very definite interest and pride in the Home and one gets the impression that they are just 'one happy family'. In fact, the Governor calls a great many of them by name."

There certainly were reasons for the residents to be happy. For instance, the Home provided residents with pocket money, and separately, the seasonal addition of spring chicken to the menu. Board members discussed both of these benefits and many others at their meetings. Also, early in the Home's history, the Board provided the residents with clothing. On July 18, 1885, the Governor of the Home recommended that the clothing allowances include one blouse and one felt hat each year and that the Home increase the number of pieces to be washed so that each inmate may have a change of underclothing- drawers, shirt and socks- twice weekly.

The research I did proved quite interesting as it offered a marked contrast between the life of residents of the past and the lives residents lead today. Today's Soldiers' Home residents seem much more self-reliant and independent than those of the past. If I had one suggestion of something which should be brought back, it would be the motorcycles with sidecars which were purchased for \$515 each in 1912 for residents' on campus mobility and enjoyment.



Hurricane Katrina...live from the AFRH-G, courtesy of the Weather Channel!

Hurricane chaser Jim Cantore and a staff of photographers and producers from the Weather Channel were onboard the AFRH-G as Katrina blew into the Mississippi Gulf Coast last month. Left - Resident Henry Pike goes on the air the night before the storm and below, Naomi Pointer couldn't miss this opportunity to get her picture taken with weather guru Jim Cantore.



AFRH-G Staff

Working together still serving our residents



The AFRH-G employees were put on administrative leave immediately following the hurricane until further notice. This didn't stop many employees that were still in the area from coming by everyday and helping out in any way they could. Dealing with personal losses of their own, sometimes their homes or their vehicles, they still wanted to see how they could help.

A group of about 20 AFRH-G staff members will be arriving in DC in the next few days to spend a few months working at the DC campus.

Above - Angelo Villafane tapes boxes full of residents' mail to be shipped to DC. Above right - Laura Throop helps stack boxes of resident records. Right - Lois Staton passes a box of resident mail.



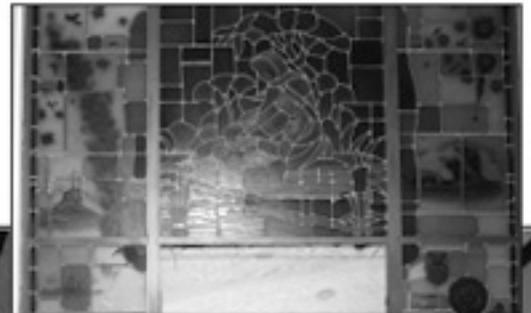
Canadian Navy pitches in on AFRH-G recovery efforts



Commander Richard Gravely (left), an officer with the Canadian Navy, presents Robert Locke with a plaque to be included in the AFRH-G's collection of memorabilia. The Canadian Navy sent a contingency of Navy personnel to assist the Seabees of CBMU-202 with clean-up and recovery efforts. Also pictured is AFRH-G Command Master Chief Joe Perrone.

Our Chapel...damaged but still standing

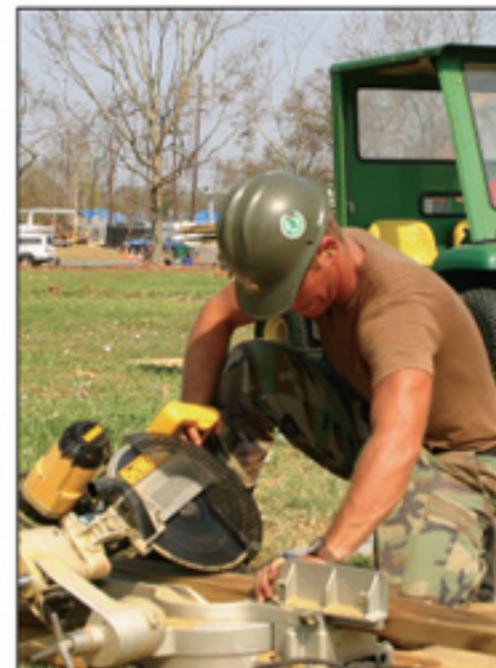
This is a photo of the inside of the AFRH-G Chapel. The front stained glass windows received no damage. Other windows did receive damage ranging from totally blown out to cracked but repairable. The tidal surge filled the Chapel with water resulting in the pews floating around banging into the windows.



Seabees of CBMU 202 turn AFRH-G into Tent City



Tents surround the Graduation Oak that is budding with new green leaves. It doesn't offer much shade now but at the rate it is recovering from Hurricane Katrina, it will soon.



The Seabees of CMBU 202 put up strong back tents for housing, a galley and an administrative space.



These Seabees work throughout the day, braving above 90 degree weather, to finish constructing a tent.



Working in teams, the Seabees of CBMU 202, based out of Key West, Fla., turned the AFRH-G into a tent city. The Seabees started working here right after the storm and have been doing work in the main building, pulling carpeting, salvaging records and equipment and removing all the mmemorabilia from the first floor.

Resident's Golf Club Championship tournament concludes with Hale as best of field

By Matthew Kayson (W)

On Wednesday, September 7th, Frank Hale's score of 78 was the best of the field of 16 golfers in the AFRH-W Residents' Golf Club Championship. Four strokes back at 82 were Ernie Fowler, Jesse Hines, and Mimi Rivkin. Gene Gilbert was first place in the Calloway division with an adjusted score of 71. The weather was great, the food even better, and the Non Commissioned Officers Association was the best as they sponsored the event. Thank you to Dick Schneider of the NCOA, Commander Burns, volunteers, and all who participated for a great day at the golf course.



From left to right, Commander Burns, Dick Schneider, resident Frank Hale and Matthew Kayson. Mr. Hale receiving award for the best of the field in the Residents' Golf Club Championship.



Mr. Frank Hale a pro at work. It's wonderful to be able to play!



Commander Burns presents Mr. Dick Schneider, National Director of State/Veterans Affairs Non Commissioned Officers Association a replica of the center page of the September Communicator issue for the NCOA support for the international exchange program.